

Chi-city gets chilly with the plunge



by Carly Travis

Sunday, March 6, I, along with 6,000 other crazy Chicagoans, took the plunge for Special Olympics.

For the past 16 years, Chicago has been host to the annual Polar Plunge. According to the Chicago Tribune, the charity raised over \$1.5 million dollars this year, and I can happily say that my teammates and I, which included seniors Alex Dreyfus, Cammie de Loys, and Talia Schiff, contributed to that sum.

The process of raising money was easy. In fact, I made the decision to plunge only a week in advance. There's no registration fee, however the goal for each participant is to raise a minimum of \$175.

If that amount sounds like a lot, it wasn't. Overnight, I had already surpassed that minimum and by the end of the week, 17 of my family and friends sponsored me on behalf of the organization.

I think half the fun of the event was gathering sponsors and seeing how much money you can raise in a short period of time. Every night I would check my inbox and be thrilled to find donations.

On the day of the event I woke up feeling excited, yet slightly nervous. I was a rookie and didn't know what to bring so I brought it all: a change of clothes for afterward, winter boots and socks, my oversized parka

(made for Canadian winters), and a towel made for two. To my dismay, none of the above was needed.

The weather on Sunday was perfect rather than polar so there was no need to over dress. I was also handed a towel when I emerged from the water and some people were even given bath robes. If I could do it over (which I plan to next year), I'd know not to over pack or dress.

The event itself was a blast. Everyone on North Avenue Beach was in high spirits and the energy was tangible. People dressed in everything from bikinis to pajamas. One man was even clad in a bubble wrap suit while two older gentlemen wore tuxedos and top hats. There was also a group of women who carried toilet plungers in the air and another large team wore Viking hats.

Surprisingly, the one person who didn't come in costume was Lady Gaga. Wearing black leggings and sunglasses, the pop singer braved the icy, cold water for her second year in a row, along with "Chicago Fire" star and fiancé Taylor Kinney and NBC meteorologist Al Roker. Other names to make headlines was Kinney's "Fire" co-stars, various news correspondents from NBC and local Chicago programs, and mayor Rahm Emanuel.

"The Polar Plunge is quintessential Chicago," Emanuel tweeted. "It is a great event that supports an even greater cause."

Gaga also took to social media posting a frenzy of pictures on Instagram and Snapchat. "You can't have empathy without pain," she wrote on Twitter. "Get FREEZING cold so they can feel your warmth."

#SpecialOlympics #PolarPlunge."

Despite the 40 degree weather and sun, patrons were still encouraged to get in and out as fast as possible. Emergency medical personnel stood by and even provided care for one woman who was pulled out of the water and wheeled off on a stretcher.

However, I didn't happen to witness Gaga, Kinney, or any emergencies. In fact, when I came out of the water, I immediately wished I would have dunked all the way. Once my feet submerged in the mushy sand, I immediately felt the shocking sensation and probably wouldn't have been able to withstand going all the way, but coming out half-way dry wasn't nearly as satisfying.

On my way home, I couldn't help but feel a strong sense of connection to the charity but also the city. Participating in a well-known event like the Polar Plunge feels like a team effort and makes me motivated to take part in other sponsored events around Chicago.

When you live in such a small community like the North Shore, it's not often that you can find large scale fundraisers to participate in.

The organizations that do host local events, don't draw nearly as much attention, sponsorship, or participation as those in the city do.

Essentially, the strong sense of camaraderie amongst a mass group of mostly strangers is what made doing the Polar Plunge so much fun and I look forward to taking part in other local Chicago events. Next up, the Shamrock Shuffle.

Editorial

Feminism means equality for both genders

This Tuesday, March 8 was International Women's Day. In class, my teacher asked who there was a feminist. As I looked around, some girls sheepishly raised their hands, myself included. The guys in the class only raised their hands upon further prompting from the teacher.

However, if she had asked, "Who here believes in equality for both genders?" most people wouldn't have hesitated in raising their hands.

The title "feminist" gets a bad rap. People seem to feel as if saying you're a feminist is something you should be self-conscious or ashamed of. But what some don't understand is the basic definition of feminism. Feminists are not anti-men, and don't believe women are superior to all others.

Feminism is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as "the advocacy of women's rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men." It is a desire for equal rights, opportunities and a playing field where women's voices are respected just as much as men's. Feminism doesn't assign specific tasks, duties, jobs or expectations to either gender.

Some are turned off by feminism due to their perception that it is "too aggressive towards men." But feminists are not here to tear men down; our goal is to build up all. However, it is indisputable that women need to be advocated more than men, by the very virtue of the fact that women are treated as inferior to men in society. Therefore, advocating for women's rights isn't an aggressive act - it is simply trying to right the wrongs that have been made throughout history, where one gender was valued more than the other.

Some people are blind to the gender inequality around them every day. The United Nation's International Labour Organization reports that in 2010, American women earned 81% of what their male counterparts earned. This doesn't mean that all women together earned 19% less than all men together. People would attempt to justify this as stay at home mothers bringing down the average salary for women. No, this is for two people doing the exact same job at the same company with the same boss. The only effect on their salary is their gender.

The gender inequality is greatedened in positions of leadership. As of Feb. 3, there are only 20 women (4.0%) who hold CEO positions at S&P 500 companies, according to Catalyst.org. In 2009, women CEOs were earning 74.5% of what male CEOs were. This sends the message to women that their talents and leadership skills aren't good enough or valued in comparison to men's. That being said, there has been progress. In 1998, only one woman led a Fortune 500 company.

Job positions and salary aren't the only source of gender inequality. Society's expectations and opinions further repress women and don't allow them to freely express their individuality and make their own choices free of judgment.

Working women are forced to feel as if they are choosing between a career and a family, due to the societal expectation that all females must aspire to be homemaker. Working mothers are questioned about what they do with their children during the day and whether they miss their kids while they are at work. However, these same questions are never posed to fathers at work, though the male is one half of the typical parental unit. Why should it be the woman who is judged by those around her for balancing work and children, while it is perfectly normal for a male to do so?

This societal judgments stretch into relationships and sexuality as well. While it is considered admirable and cool for a guy to sleep around with many girls, a female who does so is deemed a slut and is frowned upon. Society's judgment about one's personal sexual choices should be constant among genders, if it must insist on judging to begin with.

As women continue to make important strides for equality, they are met with resistance and backlash for doing so. People misconstrue feminism as being anti-male or being a movement exclusively for women. This discourages people from identifying as feminists and takes the attention away from the true mission of rectifying the inequality. Some people believe that inequality is a thing of the past, and then fail to recognize the inequalities that they encounter on a daily basis.

If you believe that men and women should have equal rights, resources, and opportunities, then step up the next time someone asks and declare that you are a proud feminist.

Backstage with a legally blonde



by Camille Baer

As a sort of ode to the end of "Legally Blonde," I thought the best farewell would be to reveal my "behind the scenes" experience of being in a musical for the first time.

Where to even begin. The past two months have been a whirlwind of singing, dancing, and "ethnic movement," (if you saw the show you'd probably understand that joke).

The winter break was over, all energy was devoted to rehearsals. I'm not kidding—our rehearsals ran until 6:00 every night on weekdays, and from 9:00 am to 4:00 or 5:00 pm on Saturday.

Several weeks prior to winter break, we had already begun to familiarize ourselves with the music in choir-opera, (the class you're required to take if interested in being in the spring musical). This

was incredibly helpful because once we started dance rehearsals, knowing the music made it easier to follow along and remember the choreography.

However, the first month of rehearsals were a hot mess. Well, not everything was—but because of how dance-heavy "Legally Blonde" was compared to shows done in the past, it took longer to come together as a cohesive show.

One of the best parts about being in the show was watching it grow and build into something we were proud to perform. The moment in which I noticed the skeleton of the musical take shape was once all of the dance numbers were finished.

Each cast took turns running through all of them, and it was surreal to see the dances officially completed and performed.

We had a chance to appreciate what the show was beginning to look like after hours of hard work put towards learning everything.

This especially rang true with the number "Whipped in to Shape". We spent literally hours running this dance over and over again until we could sing and jump rope without wheezing or choking during the

song.

About four weeks into rehearsals, both casts were called to do a run through of the entire show, which was one of the most terrifying and exhilarating moments of the rehearsal process.

It was our first time with everyone off book (meaning not reading from the script), so there was this slight pressure to have everything memorized and be prepared for anything.

At the same time, it was amazing watching people come to life as their characters from the show, adding nuances that made their performance that much more amazing.

The experience of being a part of the excitement, watching my peers transform into bubbly sorority girls or stuffy lawyers and Harvard students, made it so much more meaningful when it was finally time to perform the show.

While I want to avoid sounding sappy, the one thing, above all else, that made being in "Legally Blonde" worth it, were the friendships I formed over the course of two short months.

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